



# HARDSCRABBLE

Civil War Round Table of the Mid-Ohio Valley Newsletter

March 2021 - Vol 8

The Leadership Team notes the passing of Steve Hill. He was a charter member of the Round Table , enjoyed Civil War history and made several field trips with the group.

Steve was a member of the First Congregational Church, UCC, Sgt. Bob O'Malley Det. 1436 Marine Corps League, Past Commander of the American Legion Post 64 (life member), Sons of American Revolution (SAR), Sons of Union Veterans (SUV) where he was one of the charter members, Washington County Historical Society, Washington County Ohio Genealogical Society (OGS), Sons of American Legion Post 64, National Rifle Association (NRA), Fort Harmar Rifle Club, Matamoras Historical Society (life member) and Doan Family Association (life member).

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## Notes from Nancy Arthur

[New Podcast "Seizing Freedom" Brings Black Americans' Civil War Stories To Life](#)

WDET

The podcast delves in to the difficult history of African Americans' struggle for freedom during and after the **Civil War** and Reconstruction Era.

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## *Virginia History & Culture:*

Winter/Spring 2021 Issue

Our newest issue is out now! VMHC Members, please check your mailbox for your print copy. (*Not a member yet? [Join today!](#)*)

**This Issue's Featured Stories:**

- **History Matters Campaign Launches** (Page 4): Learn about our capital improvements plan to fundamentally reimagine the VMHC. Additional details are available at [VirginiaHistory.org/OurFuture](http://VirginiaHistory.org/OurFuture). [Read the article.](#)
- **Changing the Commonwealth With Crayons** (Page 12): Learn about the inspiring work of Leesburg fifth grader Bellen Woodard and her More Than Peach™ Project. [Read the article.](#)
- **The 50th Anniversary of Virginia's Constitution** (Page 14): Learn more about the history of this governing document. [Read the article.](#)

**READ ISSUE**

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VIRGINIA MUSEUM OF HISTORY & CULTURE

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Longstreet at Gettysburg: A Critical Reassessment by Cory M. Pfarr, is written to dispel some of the controversy around “Old Pete” and his actions at Gettysburg. Many historians and Lost Cause promoters have argued for years that Longstreet is the principal reason that the Army of Northern Virginia lost the battle in Pennsylvania and maybe the beginning of the end for the Confederacy. Pfarr writes of the criticism from many , with his arguments given with each accusation from others to dispel Longstreet’s blame.

Longstreet had a good reputation at the end of the war but it went downhill when he joined the Republican party, supported his old friend U. S. Grant, and was an advocate for reconciliation with the North. A number of soldiers who were in Gettysburg during those fateful three days came out to denounce Longstreet's actions during the battle and his "negative" attitude.

It's an interesting read about one of the greats of the South, who suffered many personal tragedies.

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Another book on my reading list is Michael Beschloss's Presidents of War, a discussion of presidential overreach from James Madison, James Polk, and Abraham Lincoln to 20<sup>th</sup> century presidents.

Lots of trivia in the footnotes!

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The Battle of the Wilderness in Myth and Memory: Reconsidering Virginia's Most Notorious Civil War Battlefield by Adam H. Petty talks about a one year period, during which three separate battles were fought in this wooded area west of Fredericksburg. The author discusses environmental history that shaped some of the military operations of the Civil War.

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With the weather of February being what it has been lately, it seems appropriate to review The Howling Storm by Kenneth W. Noe. He writes of how weather had an effect on the movements of both armies and the commanders who led them. I have often thought how the men in camp were freezing during the winter, marching through mud during seasons of heavy rain and fighting in July and August, while wearing wool uniforms. Noe talks about the weather shaping the war. The hardback is pricey but there is a paperback to be in print soon.

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**Virginia eyes outlawing relic hunting on preserved battlefield land**

- BY CLINT SCHEMMER Culpeper Star-Exponent
- Nearly every day, on one of America's Civil War battlefields, some tangible bit of history is erased. Relic hunters were at work, unearthing the metallic evidence of warfare.
- That's due to legal loopholes and the fact that most battlefield acreage has not been preserved.
- In Virginia, though, a proposal to discourage metal detecting on preserved battlefield land is gaining traction in the General Assembly.
- On Friday, the House of Delegates voted 100-0 to approve a bill by Del. Chris Runion, R-Rockingham, to make it a Class 1 misdemeanor to disturb, damage or remove "any object of antiquity" on battlefields owned or held in easement by a private preservation group.
- Relic hunting on state-owned battlefields, such as New Market, Sailor's Creek and High Bridge, is illegal. Ditto for Civil War sites preserved by the National Park Service.
- But no such protection applies to land preserved by nonprofits, such as the American Battlefield trust, Fredericksburg-based Central Virginia Battlefields Trust and Richmond Battlefields Association.
- Should Runion's bill become law, it would plug a hole in the Virginia Antiquities Act, said Keven Walker, CEO of the Shenandoah Valley Battlefields Foundation.
- "This legislation would create a legal deterrent to illegal relic hunting and disturbance of archaeological sites on battlefield

land owned by nonprofits such as ours,” Walker said in an interview Friday. “Battlefield preservation is a public-private partnership, really. A lot of the work is done by private entities working with state and federal agencies. And their land isn’t afforded the same protection under Virginia law. Looting and unauthorized disturbance of archaeological sites in Virginia happens on a fairly regular basis.”

- Hence, the Shenandoah Valley Battlefields Foundation made fixing the law its top legislative priority this year, he said. The foundation protects nearly 6,000 acres in the eight-county Shenandoah Valley Battlefields National Historic District.
- The House Agriculture, Chesapeake and Natural Resources Committee, chaired by Del. Kenneth Plum, D-Fairfax, held a hearing Wednesday on Runion’s bill, via Zoom.
- Walker, Virginia historian Clark B. Hall and American Battlefield Trust President David Duncan were among those who testified or shared statements with Plum’s committee.
- Hall, who lives in Culpeper County, heartily applauded legislators for trying to make it illegal to loot artifacts on battlefield acreage owned or preserved by private, nonprofit groups.
- “I am out on the privately-owned Brandy Station battlefield most every week, if not several times a week, and I often observe the holes that relic hunters have dug (at night). They are like daggers in my heart,” Hall said in an interview. “I know—probably better than most—that soldiers, blue and gray, still rest beneath that hallowed soil.”

- “There is no question that when we stroll on battlefields, we are also walking in sacred cemeteries,” he said. “Scores of soldiers remain buried today at Brandy Station, Cedar Mountain, Kelly’s Ford, Hansbrough’s Ridge and Freeman’s Ford, just to name a few Culpeper battle venues.”
- Duncan, president of the nation’s largest battlefield preservation group, contributed electronically submitted testimony to the discussion.
- “Thousands of acres across the Commonwealth (are) exposed to potentially destructive looting,” Duncan wrote the panel. “Without this HB 2311, archaeological resources that provide important clues to Virginia’s tumultuous past could be lost to history or be irreparably harmed.
- “Preserved battlefields protect open space, serve as ‘outdoor classrooms,’ and are economic engines for local economies, providing jobs and tourism dollars, and generating revenues for state and municipal government coffers,” he continued. “These battlefields are also living memorials to the soldiers who once struggled there. The artifacts that remain beneath these hallowed grounds are equally worthy of preservation and, with advances in ground-penetrating radar and related technology, can bring to life forgotten stories and solve century-old mysteries.”
- Julie Langan, director of the Virginia Department of Historic Resources, also testified at the committee meeting.
- Langan said her agency had no opinion on Runion’s bill.
- But in her testimony, she “confirmed that unauthorized digging is indeed a problem,” Langan said Friday via a spokesman.

- The committee voted 21-0 to approve the measure. Walker particularly thanked Dels. Alfonso Lopez, D-Arlington; Todd Gilbert, R-Woodstock; and Tony Wilt, R-Harrisonburg, for supporting Runion's bill.
- After Friday's unanimous vote by the full House, HB2311 was referred to the Senate Agriculture, Conservation and Natural Resources Committee for consideration. Sen. Chapman Peterson, D-Fairfax, chairs the committee.
- Countless times, historical questions cannot be answered through documents or first-person descriptions, Walker said. Accounts may be confusing or conflicting. But answers can come through archaeology.
- One can tell by the presence of bullets buried in the soil where a regiment's battle line stopped during a battle and what kind of troops or what units from what state were there, Walker said.
- "If that record isn't disturbed, from what the soldiers left behind, we can pinpoint those locations and get a better picture of what occurred during the battle," he said. "It's not that different than using forensics information to learn about a crime."
- For example, Walker noted, archaeologists who teamed up with relic hunters in Montana gleaned in-situ data that transformed historians' understanding of what happened during the Battle of the Little Bighorn, in which Gen. George Armstrong Custer perished.
- "Their work completely changed how we understand that battle and dispelled some myths surrounding it," he said.

- Virginia archaeologist Taft Kiser has worked with relic hunters to survey historical sites, and values their skills and interest in history.
  - But he takes a dim view of many hobbyists who metal detect at night or without asking property owners.
  - “If you don’t have permission and don’t own the land, it’s theft,” said Kiser, who has been investigating historic sites across the commonwealth since 1984. “Most people don’t even know what is being taken off their land.”
  - “You can erase sites by taking stuff,” he continued. “For instance, one of the most desirable things is a soldier’s metal ID tag. It may be the only proof that person and that soldier’s unit was there, the entire record. So if you dig it up, you’re removing part of the story, you are erasing history.”
  - “Battles are really fast, intense things and they don’t leave a lot of traces. They’re ephemeral,” Kiser said. “What they leave is a scatter of metal in the ground. Soldiers are dropping stuff as they go, running and moving. So if you collect that material, and don’t record it, that’s gone. That’s the history of the men who were fighting. You can literally erase them.”
  - Less than 20 percent of Virginia’s historically significant battlefield land has been preserved.
  - The American Battlefield Trust owns nearly 9,000 acres in the state, out of 27,000 acres it has helped preserve.
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## A Legacy of Freedom: Nimrod Burke Provides a Link Between Two Emancipations

Posted on [February 12, 2021](#) by [Kevin Pawlak](#)



Nimrod Burke in the uniform of the United States Army

Robert Carter III's 1791 Deed of Gift, which gradually freed 452 of his enslaved laborers, was the largest private emancipation of slaves until the American Civil War. Some of the descendants of the enslaved men, women, and children freed by Carter's emancipation directly participated in the abolition of slavery over 70 years later.

"Baptist Billy" Burke was Robert Carter III's "most trusted emissary." He and his family lived on the Bull Run Quarter of Leo Plantation in northern Virginia and were freed by Carter's Deed of Gift in 1795. The Burke family continued to live in Prince William County for decades after Carter freed them. In 1836, Joseph and Hannah Burke had Nimrod Burke spent the first eighteen years of his life in Prince William County. In 1854, he and his parents moved to Washington County, Ohio. In the 1860 census, Nimrod was listed as a mulatto farmer, but he also worked as a handyman under Marietta, Ohio, attorney and abolitionist Melvin Clarke, who also housed Burke. Under Clarke's tutelage, Nimrod learned to read, write, and count.

Also, Burke married Mary Freeman in 1860. their second son and named him Nimrod.

Nimrod Burke spent the first eighteen years of his life in Prince William County. In 1854, he and his parents moved to Washington County, Ohio. In the 1860 census, Nimrod was listed as a mulatto farmer, but he also worked as a handyman under Marietta, Ohio, attorney and abolitionist Melvin Clarke, who also housed Burke. Under Clarke's tutelage, Nimrod learned to read, write, and count. Also, Burke married Mary Freeman in 1860.

At the outbreak of war, Nimrod attempted to enlist in the United States Army but could not because of his race. Instead, once he became major of the 36<sup>th</sup> Ohio Infantry, Clarke hired Burke as a wagon teamster and scout. Burke served in this role with the 36<sup>th</sup> Ohio until March 1864.

Unfortunately, Melvin Clarke's service did not last that long.

During the afternoon of September 17, 1862, Melvin Clarke's 36<sup>th</sup> Ohio participated in the final Union assault of the Battle of Antietam. While charging through a ravine, Clarke, recently promoted to colonel but unaware of that fact, fell victim to enemy artillery fire. He died on the field of battle. Abolitionist Clarke, however, did not die in vain. The Union victory at Antietam prompted President Abraham Lincoln to announce his Preliminary Emancipation Proclamation on September 22. Lincoln made the presidential edict official on January 1, 1863. The Emancipation Proclamation freed enslaved men, women, and children living in areas controlled by the Confederate States of America, but it also opened the door for African Americans to serve in the United States Army. On March 23, 1864, 26-year-old Nimrod Burke became one of approximately 200,000 African American soldiers to fight for the United States Army in the Civil War.

The educated and experienced Burke received a quick promotion to Sergeant in the 23<sup>rd</sup> United States Colored Troops (USCT). Early in his service in late April and early May 1864, Nimrod returned home to Prince William County. On its way to join the Army of the Potomac, the 9<sup>th</sup> Corps passed through the county and the corps' Fourth Division, to which the 23<sup>rd</sup> USCT was attached, bivouacked at Manassas Junction for a few days before embarking on the Overland Campaign. Burke served throughout the war with the 23<sup>rd</sup> USCT and participated in, but survived, the Battle of the Crater in July 1864. Burke and his comrades mustered out of the United States Army in Texas on November 30, 1865, six days before the

13<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the United States Constitution was ratified and officially abolished slavery throughout the country.

Nimrod Burke returned home to Ohio and his family. He lived until 1914. Today, he rests under a military headstone in Greenlawn Cemetery in Chillicothe, Ohio.

Prior to returning to his birthplace in Prince William County, Burke and his comrades marched through downtown Washington, DC. President Lincoln himself watched these African American soldiers with arms on their shoulders and eagles on their buttons tramp through the nation's capital. This column "was the first body of colored troops of any magnitude that ever marched through Washington," noted an eyewitness, "and their fine appearance and demeanor, though they had been but a week or two in the service, elicited numerous expressions of the heartiest approval." He continued:

*Mr. Lincoln himself seemed greatly pleased, and acknowledged the cheers and plaudits of the colored soldiers with a dignified kindness and courtesy. As they saw the modest and true gentleman who, with head uncovered, witnessed their march, a spirit of wild enthusiasm ran through their ranks. They shouted, they cheered, they swung their caps in exuberance of their joy. They were now freemen. They had a grand and glorious object to live for. They would now make a history for their race, and there, looking down upon them, was the man who had given them this magnificent opportunity, and who was opening before them a new path of ambition and hope!*

Nimrod Burke was born a free man because Robert Carter III freed his ancestors. He served in the United States Army because Abraham Lincoln made it possible. Burke's life was a product of America's largest private emancipation before the Civil War. He fought to ensure that others of his race could experience the largest emancipation of enslaved men, women, and children in American history.

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**February 13, 2020** Topic: [History](#) Region: [Americas](#) Blog Brand: [The Buzz](#) Tags: [American Civil War](#)[Union](#)[Confederacy](#)[Bad Generals](#)[George McClellan](#)

## Unfit to Serve: The Worst Generals in the American Civil War

George McClellan wasn't the only one.

by [William Welsh Warfare History Network](#)

During the American Civil War, there were nearly 900 officers in non-militia service who were appointed to become generals. Here, William Welsh shares his list of the worst Civil War generals and commanders.

### Worst Confederate Generals

**Confederate Maj. Gen. Gideon Pillow.** After gaining ground trying to cut an escape path for the Confederates during the February 1862 [siege of Fort Donelson](#) by Union forces led Brig. Gen. Ulysses S. Grant, [Pillow](#) pulled the troops back to the fort to resupply them. As a result, he relinquished ground paid for with his soldiers' blood. Fearful of capture, he turned over command to Brig. Gen. Simon Bolivar Buckner and fled the fort on the night of February 16 in a boat that carried him across the Cumberland River to safety. For his cowardly performance, Pillow was severely reprimanded. Nevertheless, he commanded a brigade in Maj. Gen. John C. Breckinridge's Division at [Stone's River](#), where once again he demonstrated his incompetence and cowardice.

**Confederate Lt. Gen. Theophilus Holmes.** Confederate General Robert E. Lee transferred several generals, one of whom was Holmes, out of the Army of Northern Virginia following the Seven Days Battles. Holmes had a talent for sitting on the sidelines and finding excuses not to attack, as he did at [Malvern Hill](#). In his next post in the Trans-Mississippi Department, he failed to protect the Mississippi River outposts and refused to reinforce Vicksburg.

**Confederate Maj. Gen. George Pickett.** As the war wound down, so did Pickett's performance. At Five Forks he was at a shad bake with cavalry

officers two miles from his post when the Federals attacked. By the time he returned, it was too late to reverse the Federal gains. Lee publicly scolded him for his negligent performance.

**Confederate Lt. Gen. John Bell Hood.** In mid-July 1864, Confederate President Jefferson Davis replaced Army of Tennessee commander Joseph Johnston with [John Bell Hood](#). Hood was an aggressive general who liked to attack no matter what the odds. He proceeded over the next several months to wreck the Army of Tennessee at Atlanta, Franklin, and Nashville.

### **Worst Union Generals**

**Union Maj. Gen. Benjamin Butler.** As military governor of New Orleans in 1862, Butler engaged in corrupt and unethical practices. “Beast Butler,” as the Southerners called him, was an inept military commander as shown by his poor generalship at Big Bethel in 1861 and later as commander of the Army of the James in 1863-1864. At Bermuda Hundred, Butler proved himself totally incapable of brushing aside a thin screen of Confederates under General P.G.T. Beauregard that kept his two corps contained. Lt. Gen. Ulysses S. Grant could not wait to remove him from command.

**Union Maj. Gen. John Pope.** Pope was the subject of derision by his enemies and also many of his own men. Lincoln transferred Pope from the West to the East in summer 1862 to command the newly created Army of Virginia, which was tasked with covering northern Virginia while Maj. Gen. George B. McClellan campaigned on the Virginia Peninsula. Pope issued a pompous introductory address to his troops on July 14, 1862, which was full of self-praise but lacking little appreciation for his opponents’ military skills. The Kentuckian led his army straight into a trap at Second Manassas and was crushed by General Robert E. Lee’s powerful army.

**Union Maj. Gen. Ambrose Burnside.** [Burnside](#)’s failures are some of the most infamous of the conflict. He seemed to have no tactical gifts

whatsoever. At the [Battle of Antietam](#) in September 1862, he dithered all day on the Union left flank failing to brush aside Toombs' Brigade with his IX Corps. His failure is memorialized by the bridge on the battlefield that bears his name to this day. As commander of the Army of the Potomac at [Fredricksburg](#) in December 1862, his frontal assault on the impregnable Confederate position resulted in the senseless death of thousands of Yankees.

**Union Maj. Gen. George McClellan.** Although a great logistician and strategist, he lost his nerve when victory was near in the [Peninsula](#) and Antietam campaigns. In the final battles of the Peninsula Campaign, he opted to sit out the battle on a Union gunboat in the James River, leaving battlefield command to subordinates who had more guts than he did.

**Union Maj. Gen. Nathaniel Banks.** One of President Abraham Lincoln's political generals who was elevated above experienced West Point graduates, Banks performed poorly in the Shenandoah Valley in 1862, and afterwards with the Army of the Gulf where he failed utterly in the [Red River Campaign](#) in 1864. "One damn blunder from beginning to end," said Maj. Gen. William T. Sherman of the Red River Campaign.

**Union Maj. Gen. Franz Sigel.** The German-born general put in poor performances in summer 1864 in the Shenandoah Valley where he was first defeated by Maj. Gen. John Breckenridge at the [Battle of New Market](#). Later that summer at Harper's Ferry he failed to attempt to delay Early's army as it marched on Washington.

*This article first [appeared](#) on August 12, 2016 at the Warfare History Network.*

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Books by Bill Teegarden

[Angel of the Confederacy](#)

[Ten Best C.W. Books in 2020](#)

[Roots](#)

[Creoles Who Challenged Racism](#)

[Lincoln, America's First "Green President"](#)

[Psychiatry Under White Supremacy](#)

["Simon"](#)

[Chancellorsville](#)

[The Valley of the Shadow](#)

